

How to turn your community green



A guide on how to apply for funding for your Green Communities Initiative plan

ONTARIO'S GREEN COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE is the first of its kind in North America to offer an integrated community-based approach to increasing energy and water efficiency, reducing waste and preventing pollution. Besides helping to create greener communities, the program is stimulating local economies, generating jobs and contributing to the growth of Ontario's green industries.

One distinctive feature of the Green Communities Initiative is that it encourages community-wide action based on strategic plans. Participating communities set their own goals and choose their own methods for achieving them. This leads to self-sustaining projects that continue on long after the initial government involvement.

Under the program, the Ministry of Environment and Energy offers financial support to broadly-based community groups in two steps: to develop strategic plans and to implement the projects. This fact sheet describes what a community group needs to do to apply for funding for a strategic plan.

Getting started

One of the first steps you need to take is to develop a strategic plan. It will describe where your community is now, where you want it to be in the future and the steps you must take to go from here to there.

Your plan needs to include energy and water efficiency, solid waste reduction and pollution prevention projects. And it should demonstrate how these projects fit together so you do not solve one environmental problem by creating another.

* *An example of an integrated project*

A project to delay a proposed expansion of the local sewage or water treatment plants might include installing faucet aerators as well as water-saving toilets and showerheads in local households.

You, as a householder, would benefit because such a project would help to cut your gas or electricity bills - as you would use less hot water. Your community would benefit for two reasons.

First, the project would help to reduce the pressure on your water and sewage treatment plants which, in turn, would help to increase their lifespans. And second, the project would help to boost local sales of water-efficient fixtures and to create jobs for local contractors.

Essential steps - get your team together

Before you apply for funding you need to have an advisory or steering committee. It will be responsible for the planning process. Your committee will provide direction, oversee the preparation of the community profile and outline the plans of action.

Typically, advisory committees have 12 to 20 members who represent organizations involved in economic development and environmental, energy or water projects in your community. These organizations include local utilities, businesses, industries, media and government as well as service clubs, social service agencies and school boards and environmental, labor, neighborhood, church and seniors groups.

You also need to have a contractual partner. It must be incorporated - preferably as a non-profit organization - and legally capable of entering into a contract with the Ministry of Environment and Energy. Your contractual partner may be your municipality, local Chamber of Commerce or public utility, economic development corporation or a non-profit organization. The partner must be a member of the advisory or steering committee and be willing to manage the finances of the planning project.

The contractual partner will sign the application form for funding to develop a strategic plan.

* *Community support is essential*

Broad community support and participation is critical to the success of the strategic planning process. Such support and participation improves the quality of the decisions made about the community's future, strengthens the level of

commitment and co-operation of local organizations, and deepens the degree of understanding of community direction and priorities.

For the Green Community Initiative, a community is defined by municipal, regional or county boundaries. In a large city, a community may be a smaller area such as a neighborhood or a village which has been absorbed by the municipality.

What to include in your application

The Ministry of Environment and Energy will help with your community's strategic planning process by covering 90 per cent of the cost - up to a maximum of \$20,000.

Eligible costs include:

- * Community co-ordinator/facilitator (up to 18 weeks);
- * Support staff - as needed;
- * Related expenses (e.g., office space, telephone, faxes, photocopies, strategic planning sessions, etc.).

* Two points about costs

First, your community group is responsible for at least 10 per cent of the cost of developing a strategic plan so you probably will want to solicit contributions from other local organizations. You must identify all other sources of funds on your application. These include other government funding programs and in-kind or cash donations from community organizations and businesses.

Second, the contractual partner is responsible for all costs which exceed the estimated cost on which the ministry's financial support is based.

How your application is evaluated

The ministry's Application Review Committee uses a variety of criteria to determine the type and level of support your community will receive.

These include:

- * Confirmed financial support from the community;
- * The degree to which the advisory/steering

committee represents a broad spectrum of the community;

- * The current activities and past record of this advisory/steering committee. (How long has the committee been active?);
- * The current and/or past environmental programs which local organizations have sponsored or helped to start (What has been accomplished to date in your community?);
- * Environmental issues or priorities in your community;
- * Experience of committee members in mobilizing community organizations and residents around local issues;
- * The contractual partner's experience in dealing with community groups and managing contracts.

Useful information

When the contract is in place and signed by the ministry and the contractual partner, the ministry will release 90 per cent of its financial contribution. The ministry will make the final payment after receiving a detailed accounting statement and the strategic plan.

Please remember that all expenses related to the strategic planning process must be backed by invoices.

The ministry will review your strategic plan and your action plans when they are complete to determine if your community is eligible for additional financial support to help you carry out your Green Community Initiative projects.

Where to send your application form

You send four copies of your application form and four copies of the necessary supporting information to:

Green Communities Initiative
Ontario Ministry of Environment and Energy
56 Wellesley Street, 14th Floor,
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2B7
Telephone: (416) 325-1475
Fax: (416) 327-1415

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